Thank you Chair.

The Association for Promoting Sustainability in Campuses and Communities (APSCC), headquartered in Puducherry, India, is honored to participate as an observer at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-4) in Ottawa, Canada.

Let me begin by thanking the Chair and the Bureau members for their strong leadership and the Secretariat for their remarkable dedication shown throughout the INCs. I would like to also express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Canada for hosting this important meeting.

Scientific evidence unequivocally indicates that various forms of plastic pollution pose an escalating environmental and health challenge. These pollutants infiltrate the environment, impacting water, air, and food chains, ultimately reaching our bodies, as well as those of our children and future generations. With our work set to conclude in 2024, under the UNEA 5/14 resolution, we collectively aim to establish a global instrument backed by a global commitment to combat plastic pollution.

- We commend this treaty, as it presents a crucial opportunity to tackle plastic pollution with a fresh perspective, employing innovative problem-solving approaches to overcome implementation challenges.

- We suggest that shifting from Extended Producer Responsibility to Environmental Producer Responsibility can serve as an effective policy tool, expediting instrument implementation through harmonized international oversight.

- We endorse the perspective of both Member States and Observers, emphasizing the importance of discerning and tackling problematic plastics. This includes short-lived and disposable items, alongside deliberately introduced microplastics and nano-plastics. Effectively identifying these plastic types necessitates a pragmatic strategy, with regulatory frameworks tailored to each nation's circumstances. Such measures should be guided by nationally-driven action plans, recognizing the varied contexts of developed, developing, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), along with the associated implementation challenges.

- Additionally, we echo the views of the delegation, stating that financial support is necessary to accommodate various stakeholders, establish expert groups, facilitate technology transfer, build capacity, raise awareness, and encourage community and policymaker participation for in-compliance implementation.
Lastly, concerning the social dimension of our mission, let us prioritize the well-being, safeguarding, and empowerment of not just individuals laboring in the plastic management field, notably informal workers like waste pickers but also all indigenous communities disproportionately affected by these issues.

Acknowledging the potential knowledge gaps at this stage of our work, we emphasize the need for a clear roadmap. ‘TIME’ is of the essence, and we must adhere to the Precautionary Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration, which emphasizes that ‘when there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation’. In line with this Principle, treaty drafting under the UNEA 5/14 resolution preparation of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment should go hand in hand with exercising and enforcing the existing legislation on the ban on single-use plastic and plastic with high littering potential in the respective countries in their respective capabilities to start from the organized sectors: schools, colleges, universities, industries, organizations, and finally municipalities.

Given the urgency and the existing knowledge and technologies in environmental science to packaging science, pollution prevention measures should be implemented at all levels concurrently with policy formation, protocols, standard operating procedures, blueprints, and relevant tools, while ensuring compliance with regulations and national guidelines.

In conclusion, the outcome of INCs should be a robust, comprehensive agreement benefiting all Parties involved, with the shared goal of ‘ending plastic pollution including the marine environment’. Together, we can alleviate the burden of plastic pollution and pave the way for a cleaner and healthier future for us, our descendants, and the wildlife we depend on.

Dear Chair, you have our full support in the implementation of the treaty under the aegis of the national and regional enforcing authorities.

Thank you very much, Chair.

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